

THE COMPETENCY MANAGEMENT IN THE KOREAN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

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(1) INTRODUCTION

Korea has traditionally had the strong characteristics of a career civil service system (S. Kim, in press). Its origin dates back to the Kingdom of Unified Shilla about 1,200 years ago. During this era, King Wonseong (AD 788) operated a national examination system, a kind of limited competition system used to select civil servants. The system allowed only people who had finished studying classics such as *the Analects of Confucius* to take the examination. Until the 19th century, Korea had a class system. Under this system, only the privileged class could enter the government. Becoming an official meant achieving good social and economic status. This tradition survived even after the class system was abolished and no constraints were left on the qualifications to enter the civil service (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2005).

The modern civil service system began in 1949 with the legislation of the National Civil Service Act during the Rhee administration (1948–1960). The act specified, in legal form, the basic tenets of civil service, which were based on the principles of the merit system (J. Kim, 2006). It included the following provisions: (a) it classified regular government positions into five ranks; (b) it established two levels of examination were set up: the higher civil service examination and the ordinary civil service examination; (c) it established the Ministry of Government Administration (MOGA) as the central personnel agency; and (d) it emphasized that civil servants should maintain political neutrality. In spite of this Act, political considerations affected personnel management with regard to filling empty positions and effecting transfers and promotions during the Rhee administration (Park, 2006).

The civil service system was renovated through a series of innovations during the Park administration (1963–1979). The basic characteristics of the Korean civil service system were a merit system, a rank-in-person system, a closed-career system, and a centralized management system (Namkoong, 2007). For a long time, the state-led development strategy was effective in achieving rapid economic growth in the period of industrialization, and the Korean government didn't seem to have a significant problem in recruiting competent people in the labor market (S. Kim, in press). The civil service system had performed well with highly qualified, motivated personnel who had been recognized for their devotion to the task of national development (Kim and Lee, 2001). Its basic characteristics did not change much until the 1990s. Until that time, there was little demand to introduce competency-based human resource management (HRM) because it was possible to manage personnel with the principle of seniority and merit-centered personnel management system under a predictable and stable administrative and personnel environment.

However, the traditional Korean civil service was incapable of success in a rapidly changing

environment. In 1997, the foreign exchange crisis led to a severe slowdown in the economy, and the insufficient competitiveness of the Korean government was thought to have contributed to the economic crisis (P. S. Kim, 2000). The Korean civil service has been criticized for its lower levels of competitiveness and productivity compared with the Korean private sector (Kim and Kim, 1997). The Korean government thought it urgent to initiate government reforms to enhance competencies and to create a more competitive workforce. The Kim Dae-Jung administration (1998–2002) sought to create “a small and efficient but better serving government,” the ultimate goal of which was to increase Korea’s national competitiveness (Namkoong, 2007). Following the major principles of New Public Management, it emphasized small size, competitiveness, openness, and performance (Moon, 2008). It required various ideas and strategies to make the government perform better with a smaller workforce while not sacrificing the quality of public service (Kim and Lee 2001). The competency management system in the Korean national government was initiated in this circumstance.

In 1999, in accordance with increasing recognition that introducing competition within the public sector could contribute to stimulating the civil servants and changing the administrative culture and thus to enhancing government performance the Korean government introduced the Open Competitive Position System (OPS). This new system was designed as a way to recruit outstanding talents and experts to the OPS positions from both the private and public sectors. The OPS positions are about 20% of the senior positions (Grade 3, Director-General, or above) in the national government. The fundamental purpose of the OPS is to strengthen the core competencies of civil servants by exposing them to competition (S. Kim, in press). The Civil Service Commission (CSC), established as a central agency for personnel management at the national level on 24 May 1999, has taken the initiative in designing and implementing the OPS because it has sought to staff the government with qualified personnel and to build an open and flexible government adaptable to changing environmental conditions (P. S. Kim, 2000).¹ The competency model for the OPS positions was established with the five competencies of expertise, strategic leadership, problem-solving ability, managerial ability, and communication and negotiation skills. After that, in 2001, the CSC developed the Government Standard Competency Dictionary as a reference for developing the competencies of general civil servants as well as the senior officials. The common competencies that apply to all civil servants are described as the 19 standard competencies.

The Roh Moo-Hyun administration (2003–2007) announced public personnel administration reform, in which establishing the Senior Civil Service (SCS) was a key agenda, in April 2003. The objective of the SCS is to improve the competency of the government by holding senior officials accountable for individual and organizational performance, selecting and developing senior officials from an expanded government-wide pool of talents, and making senior levels more open to talented employees from the lower ranks and from the private sector. The SCS

¹ The scope of the CSC’s responsibilities includes formulating general policies for personnel management, reviewing the promotion of senior officials and other personnel actions, and implementing the OPS. The central personnel agency of Korea has been changed several times recently. With the government restructuring of 1998, the MOGA was merged with the Ministry of Home Affairs to form the Ministry of Government Affairs and Home Affairs (MOGAHA). From 1998 until the establishment of the CSC, government-wide personnel management was performed by the MOGAHA. However, HRM was still one of many functions the MOGAHA performed until personnel management functions previously under the MOGAHA were transferred to the CSC, establishing a consolidated central personnel authority by the revised National Civil Service Act of March 2004 (Namkoong, 2007). Since the Lee Myung-Bak administration took office in February 2008, the MOGAHA and the CSC have merged into the Ministry of Public Administration and Security (MOPAS).

covers all Director-General or above positions in the national government (approximately 1,500 individuals), and it is managed by combining the OPS (20%), the government-wide job posting system (30%), and agency flexibility (50%).² The competency model for the SCS was developed in 2003, and the SCS Candidate Development Program and the competency assessment were started in 2006. The SCS was fully implemented on 1 July 2006. The grading system (Grades 1-3) of the SCS was abolished, and the SCS members are managed in accordance with their ability and performance.³ Currently the Lee Myung-Bak administration (2008–2012) has expanded competency assessment to the division manager level to strengthen competency-based HRM, evaluating that competency-based culture in personnel management has been successfully implemented in the civil service.

Competency management in the Korean national government was considered as one part of reform strategies for strengthening government competitiveness and improving government performance in the Kim Dae-Jung administration (1998–2002). The competency model was first introduced in the OPS positions in 1999, and it was expanded by developing the Government Standard Competency Dictionary in 2001 to define the common competencies of all civil servants. Since implementation of the SCS in 2006, the competency assessment and competency-based education have started, and competency management has incrementally expanded to the processes of personnel management in the national government. Competency management is deemed to have contributed to improving the competency of the whole civil service and the overall competitiveness of the Korean government. Currently many central ministries and agencies have individually implemented their own competency models, and the same has happened in local authorities, such as the Seoul Metropolitan Government and other public organizations.

(2) COMPETENCY MANAGEMENT IN PRACTICE

2.1 Definitions

Modern competency management began with the research of David McClelland in the late 1960s and early 1970s to identify variables that would accurately predict successful job performance (as described in Marrelli, 1998). The Korean government has its own definitions of the relevant concepts. **Competency** is defined as “the behavioral characteristics and attitudes of the high performer related with goal achievement of an organization” by the national government [Ministry of Public Administration and Security (MOPAS), 2008: 13]. **Competency management**, also called competency-based HRM, is the process of identifying competencies and using them in the selection, disposition, evaluation and training and development of civil servants. The national government understands the **competency model** as “a systematic presentation of competencies which the public employees in each group classified by grade (hierarchical rank) and job classification should have” (MOPAS, 2008: 17).

² On the perspective of competition, the OPS means competition with the private sector, the job posting system means competition with other government agencies, and agency flexibility means internal competition. Since December 2008, the ratio of job posting positions is reduced to 15% and the same ratio is added to agency flexibility.

³ The government rank-in-person is composed of nine grades, from Grade 9 to Grade 1 (the lower the number, the higher the position), and new entrance through the open competition examination applies to only three kinds of grades: Grade 5 (junior manager level), Grade 7 (principal clerk level), and Grade 9 (clerical level). Since July 2006, the personnel management for the CSC members is based on rank-in-position rather than rank-in-person system.

Since the development of the competency model for the OPS in 1999, competency management has incrementally expanded in the national government.

2.2 Competency Models

At first, in 1999, the competency model for the OPS positions was established as one of the qualification standards for performing the roles and duties of each OPS position. After that, in 2001, the **Government Standard Competency Dictionary** was made as a reference for developing the competencies of general civil servants as well as the senior officials. Its primary purposes are to bring more detailed definition to the competencies that are important for the government to achieve its strategic goals and to create a common, objective language for talking about competencies. The 19 standard competencies are identified in the Competency Dictionary through a series of benchmarking, SME (subject matter expert) workshops and incumbent behavioral event interviews (Table 1).

Table 1: Competencies in the Government Standard Competency Dictionary

Competency	Definition
Ethics for an official	Ability to keep basic ethics as a civil servant for citizens and to behave with a basis of on ethical standards
Organizational commitment	Ability to make every effort to improve the quality and performance of work and to study by oneself for better work performance
Teamwork	Ability to collaborate on a work with others or other departments and to work as a team member for achieving common goals
Customer-oriented	Ability and attitude to understand the demands of related target groups and people and to make all efforts in order to satisfy the needs of customers
Professionalism	Ability and attitude to improve work performance and quality, to seek means for getting better performance and to learn and use new knowledge and information necessary for better performance
Business acumen	Ability to study methods for maximizing profits generated from policy results and to consider effectiveness and efficiency simultaneously in work process
Information management	Ability to effectively gather and classify information necessary for work in order to use it in time
Problem recognizing and understanding	Ability to recognize a problem through gathering and connecting information, to understand its characteristics, causes, limitations and effects and to identify what it is

Self-control	Ability to overcome heavy workload, stress, difficulties and pressures through appropriate time schedule and health management and to maintain stable mental and physical conditions by self-regulating emotional state
Communication	Ability to understand the conditions and emotional state of partners and to communicate one's intention to them through speaking or writing under friendly atmosphere
Vision	Ability to understand the organization's policy goals, to relate one's work with organizational policy, to make subordinates follow policy direction and to take the lead in working
Adaptability	Ability to understand the changes in customers, market and technology and to quickly alter the established routines and behavior patterns to fit into changes in business and policies
Strategic thinking	Ability to clarify priorities through long-term and integrative perspective, to establish specific business goals, and to arrange proposal-making and implementation in one's work with organizational overall goals and direction
Coaching/Development	Ability to recognize subordinates as assets for developing administrative capacity in current and future, to provide appropriate challenge opportunities and environment to them, and to systematically devise their growth and development through continuous concern and counseling
Resource management	Ability to get and manage human and material resources for obtaining efficient and effective performance
Effective implementation	Ability to make a time schedule, to allocate work, to keep the schedule, and cope with unexpected crisis or outbreak without fiasco
Political wit	Ability to make rational proposals with considering political power relations as well as work efficiency or effectiveness and to secure support and help necessary for business or policy achievement
Coordination and integration	Ability to decide from the perspective of national interests on a complex matter joined with various interests and to make a balanced proposal
Negotiation	Ability to make a consensus reasonably through coordination and compromise and to get agreement and cooperation from partners

Source: MOPAS (2008: 24).

The Competency Dictionary includes a detailed definition of each competency, along with specific descriptions and behavioral indicators. Each competency is divided into 5 proficiency levels, and each level is described in terms of observable behaviors showing how that

particular level is distinct from the after levels. This competency dictionary has been used as a basic reference for developing competency models for different target groups and for each of the central ministries and agencies. The dictionary can also be used for a variety of purposes including recruitment and staffing, learning and career development. Table 2 shows its structure.

Table 2: The Structure of the Government Standard Competency Dictionary

Competency	Components of competency dictionary	
Name of competency	Definition & behavioral indicators	Definition of competency
		Supportive reasons
		Behavioral indicators
	Matters to be attended when using competency	Related administrative functions
		Checkpoints for evaluation
		Relations with other competencies
	Proficiency levels	Criteria for proficiency level classification
		Descriptions of observable behaviors in Level 1 (lowest level) – Level 5 (highest level)

Currently there are different competency models for different hierarchical ranks at the national government level. The main target group of competency management is the managerial level, such as the SCS, division managers, and junior managers. The SCS competency model is used for the SCS members and candidates. The **SCS competency model** initially consisted of nine competencies: recognizing and understanding of potential problems, strategic thinking, results orientation, professionalism, innovative leadership, communication ability, customer-oriented, presentation of vision, and coordination and integration. In March 2009, it was simplified to have only six competencies: communication ability and customer-oriented were combined to create a customer satisfaction measure; presentation of vision and strategic thinking were combined; and professionalism was deleted (Table 3).

Table 3: The SCS Competency Model

Competency group	Competency	Competency definition
Thinking	Problem recognizing and understanding	Recognizing problems timely through information analysis, and identifying the cores of problems through studying various related issues
	Strategic thinking	Creating long-term vision and goals, and making action plans with clarifying priorities in order to achieve vision and goals
Working	Performance orientation	Considering various methods to maximize job performance, and pursuing effectiveness and efficiency in the process of goal achievement
	Change management	Understanding the trends and flow of environmental change, and taking measures for making an organization and

		individuals respond appropriately and adapt to changing circumstances
Relating	Customer satisfaction	Recognizing work partners as customers, understanding customers' needs, and making every endeavor to meet the demands of customers
	Coordination and integration	Understanding the interests and conflicts among stakeholders, making decisions based on a balanced perspective, and suggesting rational solutions

The **competency model for junior managers** (Grade 5) also consists of six competencies (Table 4). The competency model for junior managers (Grade 5) is implemented for the promotion and development of junior managers, and another competency model is being developed for division managers.

Table 4: The Competency Model for Junior Managers (Grade 5)

Competency	Competency definition
Policy planning	Making new policy proposals to deal with major issues and trends in the related fields, and making specific and professional reports on policy issues enable to communicate essentials
Problem-solving	Prior to formulating and implementing policies, predicting the possibilities of problems, preventing the occurrence of problems, reviewing implementation procedures, and coming up with solutions or directly tackling the problems
Information management	Gathering and analyzing necessary information promptly, and understanding and diagnosing phenomena and cases
Enthusiastic performing	Devoting oneself to role, committing to work, and steadily making efforts to accomplish better performance
Collaboration and support	Building good human relations in everyday life, and heading active collaboration and support, if necessary
Teamwork orientation	Coordinating supervisors and subordinates in order to work efficiently, facilitating teamwork, and providing voluntary cooperation

Also, many central ministries and agencies have their own competency models. Seventeen of 35 central government bodies, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Korea Customs Service, and the Korean Intellectual Property Office, have individually developed the competency models only for their civil servants.

The basic characteristics of the competency models are as follows. The general structure consists of five hierarchical levels such as competency group, competency, competency definition, sub-elements of the competency, and behavioral indicators. For example, a competency group, consisting of multiple competencies, is described with a framework of working, relating and thinking in the SCS competency model. The competencies are divided into common and specific competencies. The common competencies include the basic competencies that all civil servants should have and the competencies applied to each hierarchical rank. Examples are performance orientation, strategic thinking and cognition and

understanding. The specific competencies are established by the demand of each ministry and agency. For example, diplomatic negotiation is created as a specific competency by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. On the other hand, the generic competencies are used as the common competencies for general public employees and those attached to hierarchical rank. Leadership or managerial competency is applied to the SCS or managers as a kind of generic competencies. The technical or job-specific competencies are established as specific competencies by central ministries and agencies such as Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Korea Customs Service, and Korean Intellectual Property Office. The competencies focusing on the characteristics of public service are also included in the Government Standard Competency Dictionary. Examples are ethics for an official and organizational commitment. Also public-service-specific competencies are emphasized in the competency models of ministries and agencies. Korea Customs Service includes “moving ahead” as a specific competency. The Central Officials Training Institute emphasizes the characteristics of the public sector by including some competencies such as enthusiastic performing, responsibility, and public ethics in the competency model for training and development.

2.3 Development of Competency Management

In the case of SCS competency management, it may be helpful to explain which parties were involved in its development and implementation for the Korean government. The participants were senior officials, experts from the Korean Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology and the Korean Society for Public Personnel Administration, consultants, human resources (HR) officials in central ministries and agencies, the department staff responsible for the SCS, and the internal experts in the CSC. After extensive discussions and an in-depth literature review of competency management in general and of competency models in particular, consensus and knowledge sharing on the competency model were achieved among the HR officials, the department staff responsible for the SCS, and the internal experts. Many senior officials enthusiastically participated in the development process, and the various methods such as job analysis, in-depth interviews, questionnaire surveys, benchmarking and statistical analysis were used for establishing a valid model. External experts and consultants had provided specific knowledge and advice on the competency model in the whole process.

In the development and implementation process, there was a fundamentally skeptical view on developing and applying competency models in the public personnel management because competency management was a new concept in the public sector and because it was thought that it was unrealistic to introduce competency assessment to the senior officials (Director-General or above). The insufficient infrastructure for competency management made it more difficult because there were few experts and cases on competency management in Korea.

However, in order to improve the validity, objectivity, and reliability of the competency model itself, the pilot tests and experts' meetings were continually conducted, and the workshops and symposiums on competency management were held with the civil servants, especially with the senior officials. In order to reach consensus on then-new competency management, the Korean government has held public hearings inviting external experts, nongovernmental organizations, and mass media; international conferences inviting foreign experts; and forums inviting the staff working at HR departments in central ministries and agencies. Considering that performance is important in a highly competitive environment and that improving the government's competitiveness is essential for government success, it was indispensable to transform the merit- and seniority-centered personnel management to a more scientific,

systematic and objective personnel management. Thus competency management was introduced as an appropriate alternative for enhancing the competence and performance of civil servants.

2.4 Organization of Competency Management

The Personnel Management Office (PMO) at the MOPAS is in charge of competency management at the national government level, whereas the CSC was responsible for it until 2007. While implementing government-wide competency management such as the SCS by itself, the PMO provides the framework and basic guidelines of competency management to central ministries and agencies. Under the support and management of the PMO, each central ministry and agency operates its own competency management program. For example, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade has combined the common competencies for the SCS with the specific competencies at the ministry level to make its own competency model. The Ministry has also implemented competency-based education and competency assessment by itself.

2.5 Competency-Based Human Resource Management

The competency model can be applied to a wide range of HRM systems, such as workforce planning, selection, education and training, performance evaluation, career development and compensation (Marrelli, 1998). In the Korean government, competency management has been used mainly in the processes of workforce planning, selection, promotion, education and training, and career guidance.

A workforce plan should be established by each central ministry and agency in every five years. In the process of **workforce planning**, the central ministry or agency needs to analyze the current competencies of its civil servants and the competencies required in the near future, then make workforce plans for improving their competency levels. The first step of workforce planning is to analyze the current workforce: personnel size, disposition, structure and composition of the workforce, recent workforce change, personnel management practices, and current competency level. The second step is to predict the necessary workforce for the next five years: personnel size, composition, and required competencies for achieving the mid- and long-term vision and strategies. The third step is to estimate the gap between the current level and the future demand. If a significant gap is identified, predictable problems are analyzed, and possible alternatives are reviewed. The final step is to make strategies for reducing the gap so that, by the end of the five-year period, the objectives of the workforce plan, personnel size, and competency level will have been accomplished. A workforce plan includes recruitment (selection, promotion, and transfer), development (education, outside training, and mentoring) and disposition (career development and job posting).

In the process of **recruitment and selection**, competency management is used at selection examinations. Testing for selecting new civil servants consists of several stages, and each stage uses various selection tools for evaluating different competencies and knowledge. In a series of civil service entrance examinations for a Grade 5 position, the first exam (the Public Service Aptitude Test or PSAT) evaluates the basic traits and competencies necessary for civil servants, the second exam measures professional knowledge, and the third exam estimates competencies, attitude and values through interviews and group discussions. Recently

emphasized is applying competency model throughout the selection process. For example, for competency-based interviews at the third entrance examination for Grade 5, the government identifies specific competencies for each grade and job category by applying qualitative and quantitative approaches, then constructs competency maps and a competency encyclopedia through mapping the identified competencies. In the interviews, competency assessment, applying Behavioral Event Interview (BEI) and Assessment Center (AC) tactics, is implemented.

In the process of **promotion** to the higher grade or to the SCS, competency assessment is applied since 2006. The SCS candidates are required to go through an competency assessment process as well as the successful completion of the SCS Candidate Development Program. A group of expert assessors, composed of experienced senior officials and professionals such as consultants and professors, evaluates the competencies of the candidates in a simulated situation based on a specific problem that could surface in a real job situation (P. S. Kim, 2007). The various assessment methods such as individual interview, presentation, group discussion, role-play (1:1 and 1:2), and in-basket exercises were used to appraise each candidate's competency, but, since March 2009 after combining individual presentation and interview with 1:1 role-play, group discussion, in-basket exercises and role play (1:1 and 1:2) are commonly applied. As of 31 May 2009, 14.5%—188 out of 1,297 prospective candidates—failed to pass the competency assessment. Some ministries and agencies, such as Board of Audit and Inspection, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Rural Development Administration, Korea Customs Service, and Korean Intellectual Property Office, have used their own methods of competency assessment to estimate the promotion candidates for managerial positions such as division manager and junior manager since 2007.

For **training and development**, the Central Officials Training Institute has implemented competency-based education, using competency models developed for each grade and various methods such as on-line lectures and participatory case analysis. For example, since 2006, the SCS Candidate Development Program has used competency models to conduct competency-based education. In this program, division directors in the national government will receive action learning-based training through a series of training procedure: (1) competency assessment, (2) competency training, (3) action learning and real-world application, (4) problem-solving activities, (5) supplementary training, (6) performance evaluation, (7) comprehensive evaluation, and (8) training completion. The SCS members could receive customized training to develop their insufficient competencies. In addition, since 2009, the Central Officials Training Institute has operated the education programs that provide problem-based practical tasks and give feedback on the results, helping the trainees identify competencies that need improvement. This kind of competency-based education, focusing on problem-solving practical tasks, makes trainees actively participate in the learning process and improves their competencies effectively.

For **career guidance**, central ministries and agencies are individually operating career development programs. Based on the results of competency analysis, career consulting with a direct supervisor is conducted and the methods to improve insufficient competency are discussed. Periodically, each civil servant makes a self-development plan, and ministries support a career development plan for each individual. The data on career analysis may be used in each ministry's HRM such as in transfer, disposition and training and education.

2.6 Horizontal and vertical integration

The idea of vertical and horizontal integration is one of the differences between traditional personnel management and competency management. Competency management links the individual competencies of civil servants to the core competencies of government bodies and individual performance to the strategic goals of the organization, while the instruments of HRM are all linked and coordinated (Horton, Hondeghem, and Farnham, 2002). In the Korean government, competencies are aligned with the organizational strategies through the workforce plans of central ministries and agencies every five years. In this process of workforce planning, the central ministry needs to analyze the current competencies of its civil servants and the required competencies in the near future and to make a workforce plan for improving its competency level. The central ministry implements its own education programs, providing different programs to different grades, for improving the competency level of its civil servants in order to enhance organizational performance. Thus, the workforce plan guarantees a direct and dynamic link between strategy and competencies. At the national level, the practices of HRM are based on competencies. Competency models are developed and applied for achieving goals in selection, promotion and education. For example, competency-based education for the SCS candidates is closely related to competency assessment. At the national level, the Korean government has an integrated competency management system for managing the competencies in the processes of HRM such as workforce planning, selection, disposition, and education and development and for aligning competencies with the goals and strategies of government bodies.

2.7 Difficulties, Key Success Factors and Benefits

First of all, it is worth mentioning the main **difficulties** encountered in competency management practices. The competency model was difficult to develop because extensive opinions needed to be collected and conflicts between deductive and inductive methods needed to be resolved. High costs in money and time were consumed at the outset to make use of the professional knowledge demanded to develop competency models adequate to organizational goals and to implement them in practice. In addition, reaching consensus among the civil servants took a long time because of resistance to change.

In spite of these difficulties, it was possible to introduce competency management in the Korean government because of the **key success factors** for competency-based HRM. The key success factors are summarized as validity and appropriateness of competency models; expertise and passion of the HR managers in charge of competency management; systematic competency management aligned with organizational goals and strategies; and the understanding and compliance of the civil servants, especially the senior officials.

The **benefits** of competency management in the Korean government include the following:

- Changing to personnel management with a future-oriented perspective
- Improving the competitiveness of the government as a whole by selecting highly competent personnel regardless of seniority and backgrounds
- Realizing fairer and competency-centered personnel management through a well-organized method
- Encouraging the civil servants' concerns on competencies and voluntary efforts for developing their competencies
- Measuring and predicting the competencies required in the future in a valid and

- objective way
- Making competency development possible through active participation in training and education
- Creating a culture of continuous self-development

(3) RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN COMPETENCY MANAGEMENT

In June 2008, the HR managers in 33 central government bodies and the SCS candidates taking the competency assessment participated in a questionnaire survey on competency assessment. Of 140 respondents, 107 were the SCS candidates and 33 were the HR managers. On the question about whether competency assessment is necessary as an objective tool to measure competencies, 81.9% of the HR managers and 72.9% of the SCS candidates responded positively. On the second question, about whether the competency assessment validly predicts job-performing capacities in the future, 75.8% of the HR managers and 67.3% of the SCS candidates agreed. On the question about whether the competency assessment contributes to improving each individual's competency, 72.7% of the HR managers and 63.5% of the SCS candidates answered positively. Thus, we can say that the competency management is positively recognized by the civil servants.

It is worth mentioning the **assessment center** (AC) as a new practice concerning competency management in the Korean experience. An AC can be defined as a variety of testing techniques designed to allow candidates to demonstrate, under standardized conditions, the competencies that are most essential for success in a given job (Coleman, 1987). It includes role playing (1:1, 1:2), in-basket exercises, and leaderless group discussion. The AC was initially introduced to a process of competency assessment for the SCS candidates in June 2006 and is widely used in estimating the competencies of candidates for the OPS positions and other senior positions as well as the SCS. This kind of AC is also introduced to the central agencies such as the Korean Intellectual Property Office and the Korea Customs Service and the public organizations such as Korail (Korea Railroad Corporation) and the Korea Racing Authority.

Competency models are put to best use when they are applied in each component of HRM. Thus all the components—such as workforce planning, selection, promotion, education and training, career development, compensation and performance management—need to be integrated with competency (Marrelli, 1998). The **future plan** concerning competency management in the Korean government is to broaden HRM areas encompassed by competency management and to increase the number of civil servants involved in competency management. The Korean government evaluates competency management as better than the other methods of personnel management in terms of reliability, validity, and compliance and expects that competency management will be implemented successfully in the government.

(4) WORKFORCE PLANNING AND FUTURE COMPETENCIES

The Korean government is facing severe challenges, such as globalization, economic crisis, aging, and diversity in a rapidly changing environment. The government is dealing with such challenges by making and implementing workforce plans every five years. Each central ministry and agency needs to make a workforce plan and the MOPAS, as a central personnel agency, coordinates and integrates workforce plans at the national government level. In the

process of workforce planning, the current competencies are analyzed, and the required competencies in the near future are predicted. The main purpose of workforce plans is to improve the government competencies. Thus competency management is integrated into workforce planning in the Korean government. In the future, some competencies, such as problem recognizing and understanding, change management, vision presentation, and strategic thinking, may be more important for responding to the challenges and changes that the government faces.

The evolutionary path of workforce planning is described as follows: (1) basic gap analysis, (2) workforce analytics, (3) modeling and forecasting, and (4) workforce segmentation (Lavelle, 2007). Workforce analytics means analyzing current and historic workforce data, and modeling and forecasting is to test the strategic veracity of different staffing models, while workforce segmentation is to distinguish between roles and skill sets in terms of how vital they are to government success. In Korea, the different competency models are applied to the different hierarchical ranks in the process of workforce planning because the demanded competencies and impacts are different according to ranks or positions in each ministry and agency. For example, the competency model for the SCS is different from that for the junior manager. The required competencies from the CSC are different from those from the junior manager, and the objectives and goals for improving competency levels are also different from each other. Thus a workforce plan for the senior officials needs to be different from that for the junior managers even in a ministry or agency. The workforce plan needs to be specified and segmented, depending on the target groups. Therefore, the workforce planning of the Korean government is at the final stage of the evolutionary path of workforce planning.

(5) CONCLUSION: EVALUATION OF COMPETENCY MANAGEMENT IN THE KOREAN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

After the foreign exchange crisis of 1997, there was a social consensus that it was urgent to initiate government reforms in order to create a more competitive workforce. The Kim Dae-Jung administration (1998–2002) developed competency models and introduced competency management to the national government. The establishment of the SCS in 2006 has accelerated the implementation of competency management. Competency management has incrementally expanded and strengthened in the national government: more government bodies have individually adopted competency management, more civil servants are involved in competency management, and more HRM areas are encompassed by competency management.

Competency management is positively evaluated as having contributed to improving the competency of the whole civil service and the overall competitiveness of the Korean government. It has introduced the creation of a culture of self-development and continuous learning in the society of civil servants as well as in the managerial groups. At the national government level, competency management has gradually changed personnel management from a traditional approach emphasizing seniority to a future-directed orientation concentrating on fairer and competency-based practices. It has been benchmarked by many public enterprises and private corporations.

Competency management is a more useful instrument than the old model for selection, evaluation, and training and development. It provides greater encouragement for personnel development as well as a better understanding of what is necessary to achieve high

performance at work (Nunes, Martin and Duarte, 2007). We can expect that when civil servants apply their competencies to their work, the result is effective performance, which in turn leads to the achievement of government objectives (Marrelli, 1998). However, it is also well known that a reform in personnel management is a long-term process that requires continuous attention over a number of years to achieve actual changes in civil servants' behavior and culture (Namkoong, 2007).

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Remarks

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